

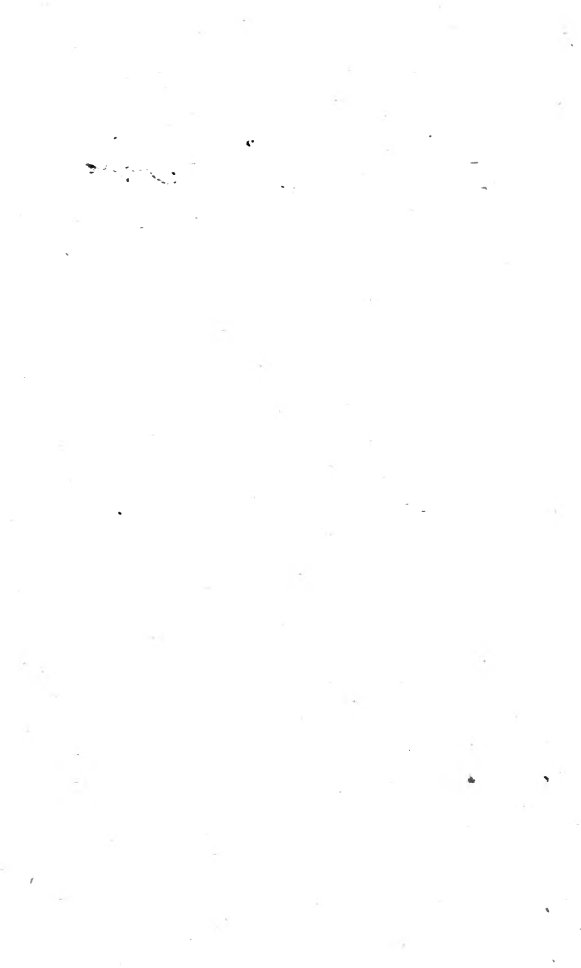
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COTTAGE

CONTRASTS;

OR,

C & Price

After Pleasure comes Pain.



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COTTAGE CONTRASTS,

&c.

I Suppose it is not peculiar to the town of Compton (though it has been my lot to see such sights exhibited more frequently in its streets than elsewhere) that the idle and the gossiping part of its female inhabitants should, at the first approach of fine weather as if by mutual consent, assemble in little knots at the doors of each other's houses, wasting their time in talking over the affairs of their neighbours, or in vacantly gazing at the passers by. Often have I seen with compassion parties thus collected, giving cause to the industrious and reflecting part of the community to think with a sigh on the fate of the poor children left by such mothers in the deserted cottage, exposed to the dangers of fire, the petulant tyranny of an elder brother or sister, or perhaps turned loose into the street to mix with others neglected and forsaken like themselves, there to learn oaths and curses while the tongue can only imperfectly utter the name

of the God which it blasphemes, and before the heart has learnt to acknowledge that sacred name as the sound of blessedness, and the signal for gratitude.

It is sad, very sad to see such sights, and think upon their consequences; far pleasanter to turn from the contemplation of them to the gladdening prospect of chearful industry rejoicing in its labour, and to listen to the "songs of joy and health" which are said peculiarly to enliven "the dwellings of the righteous." With this view I would gladly conduct my readers, by description at least, under the roof of William Bateson, whose cottage when last I visited it, appeared to me to be particularly the abode of cleanliness, harmony, and peace. The lowliness of the dwelling by no means excluded comfort; its furniture was perhaps somewhat scanty, but it was whole and decent; and what there was was rubbed with a diligence which might bring disgrace on many a table in a less humble habitation. Here was to be seen the chest of drawers so bright that it reflected the honest and happy countenances which passed before it, the white wooden table on which no stain appeared, the fire irons where rust was never visible, the little rose tree adorning the window, whose opening flowers gave at once sweetness and chearfulness to the dwell-

ing—and here too, far more prized than all, was the shelf on which was placed their dearest earthly possession : there neatly covered (for even its outward appearance was precious to them) lay that best of all books from whose sacred pages this happy family daily learnt to make their happiness lasting, by ascribing all their enjoyments to the goodness of their heavenly Father, and by bringing into their constant practice those principles of divine love and wisdom, by which fallen man is mercifully instructed in every duty towards himself, his neighbour, and his God. Two prayer books, and one or two other volumes were neatly ranged in order on the shelf, and sure I am no one could have looked into this dwelling without forming a favorable opinion of its inhabitants, though not one of them had been visible. It has been my good fortune to see, at different times, each member of the little household, and I have been alike pleased with the good tempered countenance of the active Mary, the honest intelligence of her industrious Husband, and the venerable aspect of his silver-haired Father, whose shaking head, and trembling hands shewed plainly that he was dependant upon the good offices of those around him for his personal comforts, and whose chearful looks, and cleanly appearance proved as clearly that these kind

offices were well performed. It was pleasant to observe how even the youngest of the children, taught by the lessons and example of their good mother, was eager to wait upon its infirm old grandfather; and many a precept of wisdom and piety did they in return receive from his lips; for though his bodily activity was destroyed by a severe stroke of palsy, the powers of his mind were spared, and gladly did he try to make those powers instrumental to the good of those around him.

It has not been possible for me, personally, to become as well acquainted with William Bateson as with the other inmates of this lowly dwelling, for the care of providing for his numerous family necessarily occasions his absence from the cottage during the greatest part of the day; but whenever I have seen him, his conversation and manners have strongly interested me in his favour; the character he bears is that of a diligent workman, a kind relation, and a sincere christian, and some little circumstances attending his early life which have reached my knowledge, have rather exalted than lowered him in my opinion, since they have shewn me that he has been earnest in the work of his salvation, and that by the blessing of Divine Grace on his own endeavours, and the endeavours of those

around him, he has been enabled to triumph over infirmity and error, to which by nature all are prone, and which with God's help all must labour to overcome.

I am strongly tempted to repeat a conversation I once overheard in this dwelling, because I think it is possible some useful hints may be received from it. Could my readers have beheld those between whom it passed, I am very sure they would have been convinced that *happiness* at least was on the side of my favorite speaker, and would rather have been the chearful and contented Mary, than the lounging and idle wife of Isaac Miller. The appearance of the latter might immediately have marked her out as one of the loiterers I have before described, idle themselves and desirous of finding or making others as much so; but this purpose was not accomplished in the present instance, for Mary's hands continued to be as busily employed after her unpleasing neighbour sauntered in, as before; and the conversation was carried on in the following terms.

Hannah Miller—Well Mary, how goes the world with you? it is so seldom one gets a sight of you that you might be dead and buried, and no one be the wiser. What makes you stay so much at home?

Mary Bateson—Partly business Hannah, and

partly pleasure—four little children to attend to make stirring work at home; some to nurse, some to teach, and all to work for, leave but little time for visiting; and, truth to say, when the bustling part of the day is over, when my husband is come home at night from his work, and we are able to sit down in comfort by our own fireside, I believe there are few places would be as pleasant to me as home.

Hannah—Well, that may be the case with you that never get a wrong word from your master I'll engage—a quiet, peaceable man as ever lived; but things are different in some folk's houses—my sot of a husband has not done a stroke of work these three days, and when he will again God knows—drink, drink, drink, continually—never since Sunday have I had a quiet moment with him; off to the alehouse as soon as it is light, and only coming home at night to swear and abuse his wife and children.

Mary—That is sad indeed, and heartily do I pity you; but can you do nothing Hannah towards turning him from these dreadful habits? could not you seize some opportunity when he is sober to talk to him gently on the subject, and persuade him that he is taking the way to ruin both soul and body by such courses?—and Sunday too of all days to begin!

Hannah—Why as to that I should not so much complain if it had begun and ended there; last Sunday you know is always kept as a sort of feast amongst us, and poor people should have a bit of a holiday sometimes: I do not expect my master to be better than his neighbours, but the mischief is, when once he gets a drop too much liquor there is no knowing where he will stop; drunk he came home on Sunday night, and drunk he may be till next Sunday for aught I know.

Mary—Ah Hannah! these are some of the sad effects of that strange custom which has been amongst us so long, of keeping our Midlent Sunday in so different a way from all the rest: often has it been my wonder, and my sorrow too, to think that every year so many hundreds of people should meet together from far and near, to think of nothing but eating and drinking, and turning God's own day into one of riot and intemperance. Does not it seem strange that such a custom should ever have been thought of and allowed?

Hannah—Strange! no I don't know that there is any thing so very strange in it; there are a vast many places where something of the same sort is done. When I lived at Marston there were Wakes there every year; they did not begin till the Monday to be sure,

but many people used to meet on Sunday, and feast and walk about, and it was much the same sort of a day as our Midlent Sunday is here.

Mary—The more's the pity.—What! can we find no other day for a holiday (as we call it) but that holy one which God has appointed for so very different a purpose?—We were talking over this matter last night, and wondering how it came about that such a custom as this Midlent Sunday of our's should ever have begun, and my father said that of all times in the year it seemed to him to be the most unfit for such a purpose, since Lent is a season which the Church has set apart as one in which we are particularly called upon to repent, and humble ourselves before God.—You know it is at the end of Lent that we keep Good Friday holy, that day on which our blessed Saviour graciously condescended to die for us, and as it was Sin which made these sufferings necessary, I think it is very fit that we should employ our thoughts a good deal at this time in searching out our faults, and earnestly praying to be delivered from them.—Surely *this* was never meant to be a time of riot and feasting!

Hannah—But I tell you again that I would never complain of him for taking a chearful glass every now and then if it came but sel-

dom, on a feast day or such like; any thing in reason, but Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, no work done.—I wonder what sort of wages he is to bring home on Saturday night.

Mary—Oh Hannah, do not think only of the wages, hard indeed as it is upon you and your children to be without them, but think more than all of the sin he is committing, which you seem to consider so lightly that I fear you have never endeavoured to persuade him from it as you should have done.

Hannah—Persuade him! one might as well speak to a stone as try to turn him away from the alehouse; many a *rating* have I given him on the subject I promise you, and many another shall he have I can tell him.

Mary—(speaking very gently) Perhaps *rating* as you call it, may not be the best method of curing him of his faults; but we will talk of this by and by: it was not of his drunkenness that I blamed you for thinking too little, but of the sin of Sabbath-breaking, which, from your way of naming it, I was afraid you rather encouraged than opposed—excuse my speaking so plainly, but we are neighbours, and I should be glad if I could in any way be of service to you.

Hannah—Oh, no offence, I am not of a touchy temper I can assure you; you may say what you please, I shall not take it amiss.

Mary—Well then I would ask you how it comes about that you seem to think so lightly of the Sabbath as appears to be the case from your discourse just now; surely you know that the observance of it was God's own command, and that he not only enjoined us to keep it, but set an example of doing so Himself, by blessing that day and making it holy after He had created the heavens and the earth, and all things in them?

Hannah—Yes, yes; I have read that in the Bible often enough.

Mary—If He commanded us then to set it apart for His service, as He certainly did, I cannot think how it can be more safe *wilfully* to break this commandment than any other which He has given us.—He who said “thou shalt do no murder,” said at the same time “remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy,” and we are therefore as much bound to obey the one commandment as the other. But we feel no wish to *commit murder*, and therefore we never think of excusing its guilt. The sin of Sabbath-breaking has more pleasure, to tempt us, and we are not sorry to persuade ourselves sometimes that there can be nothing *very* wrong in yielding to it.

Hannah—You have such a strange odd way of putting things Mary!—To hear you talk one would think there was no difference

between the sin of killing a man, which I think as wicked as you can do, and that of merely staying away from Church, to take one's pleasure a little one day in the week.

Mary—As for talking about *which* is the *greatest* sin forbidden in the commandments, this is of little consequence to you or to me either; what we have to do is to endeavour to keep clear from the commission of any of them. But is there not, father, (and she turned to the old man who had been sitting silently in the corner during this conversation) some thing said in the Bible which makes it plain that he who *determines* to break any one commandment because it favors his wishes to do so, is as guilty as if he had sinned against more?

Father—Yes Mary, it is written in St. James I think, “Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For He that said do not commit adultery, said also do not kill. Now if thou do not commit adultery, yet if thou kill thou art become a transgressor of the law”—which seems to me plainly to say, that we are not to *choose* which of the commandments we will keep, abiding by some and rejecting others; but that such as *deliberately* indulge in the commission of *any* thing which they know to be contrary to the commands of God, are in danger of condemnation.

Hannah—Well, you may be very right, I am no great scholar, so I cannot say much against it; but you never shall persuade me either, that there can be any very great sin, or any sin at all in having *one* holiday in the year, and feasting, and walking about, and seeing one's friends, and enjoying one's-self, instead of going to Church, and reading good books all day long. I know many folks that are no Sabbath-breakers neither, who do this on *one* Sunday in the year, and why I am to pretend to be better than they I know not.

Mary—Because dear Hannah you have your own soul to answer for; and their being negligent of their's will avail you nothing when you come to give up your great account: but do tell me whether you ever heard that God excepted any *one* Sunday in the year when he commanded the Sabbath to be kept holy, for unless He did I can never be persuaded that it is safe and right to desert the Church for the alehouse, for the streets, or even for entertaining our friends in our own houses?

Hannah—No, I suppose not in so many words; but wiser people than either you or I Mary, are of my way of thinking. It was only last night when I went to the shop over the way to buy a bit of tea and sugar, that I heard a vast many of our folk by the door of

the Golden Lion talking the matter over, and Mr. Smith who keeps it and has a deal of learning said, it was downright Methodism to try and take from the poor all their amusements. I did not rightly understand all he said, but I know he brought something out of the Bible to prove he was right, so what will you say to that? something about the Sabbath being made for man's enjoyment. I cannot justly recollect what it was.

Father—"The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath?"—Aye—those words have been often misapplied, but only by those who wilfully choose to misunderstand them. Any one who reads the chapter where they are written (Mark ii.) may see clearly enough that our Lord, in speaking them, intended to reprove the hypocritical spirit of the Pharisees who placed all their religion in *outward forms*, and would have prevented Him from healing the sick on this day had it been possible: but He whose design was mercy in giving us our Sunday, and whose every design is mercy in one shape or other, taught them that works of *necessity* are *permitted*, and works of *charity* are *acceptable* to our Heavenly Father on whatever day they are performed. If therefore Mr. Smith can prove that the drunkenness, rioting, and quarrelling too often seen on this day do good

either to the bodies or souls of men, I have nothing more to say against it, but common sense must tell us that in a Sunday so spent there is nothing of the blessedness which the Prophet Isaiah describes when he says, they "that join themselves to the Lord to serve Him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be His servants, every one that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; even them will I bring to my holy mountain and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings, and their sacrifices shall be acceptable upon mine altar." (Chap. lvi. 6. 7.)

Hannah—Well, all I can say is, they will be bad times when all amusements for poor folks are to be put down, and never may I live to see them.

Mary—But why should all amusements for poor folks be put down?—I am very sure all our innocent pleasures will never be forbidden, and the sooner we leave off taking pleasure in what is not innocent the better. Whatever we can indulge in without its interfering with our duty to God, our neighbour or ourselves, every wise and good person would be ready to grant us; and every thing else let us be contented to resign. Now tell me honestly Hannah, do you think it right to neglect the Church for the alehouse; to exchange words

of prayer and songs of praise for profane oaths, indecent merriment, or brutal violence, which often disgrace our streets on this day?—No, I am sure you cannot.

Hannah—You seem to take a pleasure Mary, in making your neighbours worse than they are. Many a one I will answer for it thinks of nothing but enjoying a little harmless pleasure, and goes home at night neither drunk nor quarrelsome; and as for Church, I am sure I have often and often seen Compton Church as full if not fuller on that day than any other in the year.

Mary—So have I too, but it has not therefore convinced me that there was a greater spirit of religion in it on that day than any other. No Hannah, I have sometimes been vexed to see swarms of men crowding into Church, their heads half muzzy with liquor before they came there; or, tired perhaps with a long walk from some distant part of the country, sleeping all the time our good Rector has been preaching, and, as soon as the sermon was over, rushing out, seemingly all hurry and impatience to flock again to the alehouse, and forget every bit of good advice they may have heard there. And is it a pleasanter sight, think you, to see the women on these occasions decked out in finery sadly unbecoming them, trying to attract notice,

and thinking only of dress and vanity?—No, no, Hannah, many a poor girl has had reason all her life to repent that she ever joined in such feastings and merry-makings; and from my heart I wish there was an end of them for ever at Compton.

Hannah—So do not I, nor ever shall: you shall never make a Methodist of me as long as you live, I assure you Mary.

Mary—I do not want to make a Methodist of you or of any one believe me, but I heartily wish we should all be Christians, living according to the spirit of that holy religion which teaches us that “denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live righteously, soberly, and godly in this present world.” (Tit. ii. 12.) And as for happiness, trust me Hannah, the comfort of a Sunday evening spent in affection and peace by one’s own fireside with all one’s family about one, is more than all the feasting and gait in the world can bestow.

Father—My poor Mary has a right to talk on this subject, for thanks be to the Lord! she has weaned me from folly that in his younger days gave this poor old heart of mine many a pang, and cost these eyes many a bitter tear; and if a father’s blessing can do her good justly has she earned it, and heartily is it given her every day of her life. I have

no objection to speak of it now it's past and gone by ; but my William in his youth was not by a great deal so steady as he might have been, and Mary has known to her cost many a time and oft, that Midlent Sunday brought no happiness along with it.

Mary—But never will that time return again I feel certain father ; and oh ! how it gladdens my heart, as that day comes round, to hear my dear husband thanking God who has enabled him to see the error of his ways, and given him grace to turn from them. It was only last Sunday night, as we heard the sound of drunkenness and riot in the streets, that he said to me with a look and tone that went straight to my heart, “ It is written in the Bible, Mary, “ A good wife is a good portion which shall be given in the portion of them that fear the Lord,” (Ecclus. xxvi. 3.) but He gave me mine when I feared Him not, and what am I that I should receive such mercies?”—Oh Hannah ! such a word of praise from a husband's lips makes one rich amends for every tear one has ever shed over former sufferings.

Father—And my belief is that many a wife might and would have such a reward did she take the right way to set about deserving it. Mary does not like to hear herself praised, but I must say never woman strove more dili-

gently than she did to win her husband to right ways, or to keep him in them when he had taken to them.

Hannah—Why how did she set to work? I am sure I have talked and talked till I am tired, and all to no purpose.

Father—I think her actions did more for her than her words, for in the first place however much she grieved alone, she always took care he should have a home of peace and cheerfulness to come to when he returned from work, and by this means gave herself the comfort of knowing that no fault of her's ever drove him from his own fireside. William was never an ill-tempered man; and though sometimes when he was in liquor he would give her cross words, yet as she always took them mildly, and as he really loved her, he would be ready enough in the morning when he was sober to express his sorrow for what had passed, and to promise better conduct.

Hannah—Aye, so will my master sometimes; but “a fig for your promises” say I, “mouths must be fed with meat, promises are but poor fare; bring home your wages at night as you should do, and make no more words about it; as for your promises I believe nothing of them.”

Mary—Ah Hannah! I sadly fear this will

but drive him farther from you. Rather try to shew him how for his own sake you sorrow over his faults, and, when he seems convinced of them, talk to him of that redeeming Lord who will give him strength and power to overcome them. Pray *with* him, and *for* him; encourage him to go to Church, and to read his Bible at home; and when he comes home at night strive to make his cottage look so clean and chearful, give him such a hearty welcome, and teach his children to be so dutiful and obedient, that he may have no cause to wish for other company; then if he brings a neighbour or a friend in with him, do not look displeased and vexed, as I have seen some wives do, but receive them pleasantly, by which means he will be convinced that you have really his happiness at heart.

Hannah—Aye, aye, fine talking,—easier to preach than practise.

Father—Mary has done both and found them answer: many a chearful and pleasant evening do we pass with a friendly neighbour or two at home; and as William's wages come in regularly and she is a good manager, she often contrives to give them something comfortable for supper; we have our feastings you see as well as others.—Sunday is a constant holiday in our house—Thank God! we are not so far from Church but that even I can

hobble there with my stick and the help of one of my children ; and I believe we would any of us rather go without our dinners than miss the comfort of listening to what our good Parson says to us there : then we always fare better at our meals on that day than any other—some of our other relations often pass the evenings with us, or William and Mary take their children a pleasant walk into the country if the weather is fine ! and at night I think our chapter in the Bible is always read with more than common gratitude, and we are more disposed to praise God for His mercies at the close of this day than of any other in the week.

Mary—You forget too dear father, the pleasure there is in hearing the children repeat in their turn the pretty hymns and stories they have learnt at school during the week days ; do you remember last Sunday how delighted you were with those verses about the happiness of the Sabbath which our Thomas had picked up somewhere, and which you bade him write out for you—I do not know who made them, but they are so sweet sounding I should quite like to repeat them to you Hannah.

Hannah—Well let us hear them ; I love a bit of verse myself, or a good song or something of that sort.

Mary—These, I think deserve to be printed in letters of gold—I shall never forget them I am sure—(she repeats)

Dear is the hallow'd morn to me
When village bells awake the day,
And by their sacred minstrelsey
Call me from earthly cares away.

And dear to me the winged hour
Spent in thy hallow'd courts O Lord!
To feel devotion's soothing power
And catch the manna of Thy word.

Dear too to me the loud Amen
Which echoes through Thy blest abode,
Which swells, and sinks, and swells again,
Dies on the walls but lives to God.

And dear the simple minstrelsey
Sung with the pomp of rustic art,
That holy heav'nly melody
The music of a grateful heart.

In secret I have often pray'd
And still the anxious tear would fall,
But on thy sacred Altar laid
The fire descends, and dries them all.

Oft when the world with iron bands
Has bound me in its six days chain,
This bursts them like the strong man's hands
And lets my spirit loose again.

Then dear to me the Sabbath morn,
The village bells, the Pastor's voice
These oft have found my heart forlorn,
And always bade that heart rejoice.*

* The writer of this little dialogue is ignorant how these lines came into her possession, or whether they have ever appeared in print; if they have not done so, she hopes she may be pardoned for inserting them, which she has been tempted to do by the piety and beauty of the composition.

Hannah—Well it's all very good, and very pretty sounding too. But bless me! what a time have I stood gossiping here! four o'clock I declare! high time that I should be gone.

So saying she quitted the cottage, and thus I fear vanished from her mind every trace of that which was designed to lead her soul to happiness here and hereafter.—But with us, my friends let it not be so; let us frequently call to mind that affectionate expostulation of our God, who speaking of His rebellious children of old, thus breaths forth the language of the tenderest Parent. “O that there were such an heart in them that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!” (Deut. v. 29.) Our happiness you see is His great design, and *real* happiness He knows can never be attained but by “drawing nigh unto Him” who is the Fountain of all true blessedness, and who by the mouth of His apostle has promised upon this condition to “draw nigh unto us.” (James iv. 8) It is by Prayer that this must be accomplished; ‘fervent, effectual Prayer;’ pure, holy, penitent; Prayer, which raises the affections of the worshipper to meet the mercies that it draws down upon him from his God; Prayer, which opening Heaven itself in the soul of man whilst on earth, enables him to receive into his heart that Holy Spirit

whose fruits are "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness temperance." To such a state would this loving and merciful Father conduct us by His Sabbaths; to such a state be it the earnest wish of all His children to aspire: evermore let us therefore hearken to his gracious invitations speaking in every part of His holy word these comforting assurances, "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words; then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father," (Isaiah lviii. 13, 14.)—or as He expresses it in another part of the Sacred Volume, speaking also of such as keep His Sabbaths holy, "Unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off." (Isaiah lvi. 5.)

THE END.

